

THE
O R I G I N
O F
FAIRLOP FAIR,

ANNUALLY HELD ROUND THE

Great Oak,

On HAINAULT FOREST, in ESSEX,

On the first Friday in July.

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE FOUNDER,

MR. DANIEL DAY;

interspersed with many genuine Anecdotes of that worthy
Character, whose Simplicity of Manners could only
be equalled by the Rectitude of his Heart.

"COME SEE RURAL FELICITY."

THE SECOND EDITION, WITH ADDITIONS.

L O N D O N :

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P R E F A C E.

THE Author of this little Tract, from an Intimacy with One of the Descendants of Mr. Daniel Day, is enabled to assure his Readers that the Account and Anecdotes are Facts; he shall say nothing of the Performance, as it is only meant to be Half-an-hour's Amusement to the Lovers of Rural Felicity; to the Critic's Lash he is indifferent, as he looks upon them to be a Species of Misanthropists.

PREFACE

THE Editor of the *Times*, from an
intimate acquaintance with the
Mr. Daniel Day, is anxious to state his
readers that the Account and Associates
are false; he shall say nothing of the
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ORIGIN
OF
FAIRLOP FAIR.

THE following account will afford us an instance, of its being in the power, of almost every man, to add to the felicity of his neighbours and fellow creatures. THE SUBJECT before us, though in the middling rank of life, for a series of years had the gratification to see the hearts of hundreds annually rejoiced and made glad, by his means, around the old OAK, and thousands to this time assemble there, on the day he set apart for innocent pastime and rational recreation, so that the benevolent views of his heart were not buried with him in his grave: and, we most sincerely hope, while a vestige of the old OAK shall remain, or the ground whereon it stands shall be found, the sons and daughters of Freedom and Hilarity will meet on the spot, in commemoration of THE FOUNDER OF THE FEAST AND FAIR, *Daniel Day*.

MR. DANIEL DAY

was born in the parish of St. Mary Overy's, (in which parish his father was an opulent brewer) in the year 1683, and for a great number of years, until his death, was a very considerable Engine, Pump and Block maker, in the parish of SAINT JOHN'S, WAPPING, where to this day, his memory is respected as a great benefactor to that parish, particularly in the gift of the great bell at the consecration of the new church in 1760, and as an upright and ingenious tradesman, a great mechanic, as the many inventions he has left behind him in the construction of various description of engines

and pumps, and of the improvement he made in the jiggers used by brewers in the starting of beer which is worked by them to this day, sufficiently proves. He was of a most charitable and humane temper, and exemplarily generous and liberal in his principles and actions, to evince this we need only mention his portioning off his twin nieces in his life time with 1000l. each, one of whom lies buried near him, the other is living now, a widow. He would not only lend a distressed friend considerable sums, but he invariably refused the smallest interest, and very frequently forgave the principle; in short his character for probity was such, that his neighbours were ever satisfied with his arbitrations in their disputes, to which his abilities were amply adequate; his memory was astonishingly retentive, in so great a degree, as to enable him to repeat almost verbatim, a long discourse or sermon. He was not the enemy of any man, or particular description of men, but the muscles of his face were violently agitated whenever he heard of litigation in law, and he always professed to be uneasy in the company of the practitioners of it.

Notwithstanding the very large sums he distributed in charities and lent, he lived in comfort and died rich, leaving to the eight fatherless children of his niece, whom we have mentioned to be deceased, the bulk of his property to be equally divided.

It is with some degree of pain we mention that Mr. Day was never married, because with a heart replete with the milk of human kindness, and possessing an understanding at the same time solid and elevated, he wanted only the additional great characters of a husband and father to have made him more completely the great and good man.

Mr. Day had many eccentricities, but they were unoffend-

unoffending in their nature, and no man was ever splashed or injured by his hobby horse. We should be doing injustice to his memory if we did not mention a peculiar and very high trait in his character, and that was, his kindness to his servants; in a few words, he was their friend. He had a widowed house-keeper who lived with him for thirty years, and died in his life-time at a very advanced age. She had two very strong attachments, one to her wedding ring and garments, and the other to tea; when she died, Mr. Day would not permit her ring to be taken off, he said, "If that was attempted, she would come to life again," and directed that she should be cloathed and buried in her wedding suit and a pound of tea in each hand; and these directions were literally obeyed.

This whim was highly illustrative of his good nature, for although he had an aversion to tea, and never drank it, he did not debar his servants the use of it; and in the instance of his old house-keeper, carried his liberality even into her grave, by providing her a commodity there, which she was so fond of here. And although a bachelor, no man honored more the marriage state as will be seen hereafter.

Mr. Day enjoyed as much as any man his friend and pitcher, but he was temperate and regular in his mode of living, and very fond of the exercise of walking; by this means he enjoyed an uncommon share of health, until his death.

We are now drawing towards that last scene which sooner or later must happen to the mighty and the weak, the rich and the poor, the good and the bad.

A few years before Mr. Day's death, a branch of the Old Oak received a shock, either by decay, by lightening, or storm, this operated upon Mr. Day as

the warning of an old friend, it pointed out to him the instability of life, and the effects of time; and, he received the call with the resignation of a christian, and the fortitude of a man, who was conscious of having performed his allotted part with propriety.

He set about with alacrity, a task which to some men would have been an awful preparation for the journey: his first business was to provide the repository; by the favour of the lord of the manor, he procured the dismembered limb of his favourite tree: this being done, he employed a Mr. Clear, a carpenter, to measure him for a coffin, and to make it out of this oak. Mr. Clear executed his job, and brought home his work, which was neatly pannelled, and highly rubbed and varnished with bees-wax. Mr. D. viewed his future habitation with the utmost serenity and philosophy, And addressing himself to the carpenter, said, "Mr. Clear I have heard that when a person dies he is much stretched, and consequently much longer than when living:" and punning upon the man's name, went on, "now Mr. Clear, it is not very *clear* to me that you have made this coffin long enough, but however we'll try;" and laying himself down in the coffin, he found it too short. "Never mind it," says the Stoic, "you must desire my executors to cut off my head and put it between my legs."

His next care was the disposition of his estate, and in this instance, as well as in every other, action of his life, he demonstrated himself to be a just and honest man.

After bequeathing several legacies, and providing for the children of his niece, as we have before observed; he carried his harmless oddities to the last action possible, and in that his mind
shone

shone with its wonted benignity. He directed his executors to convey his remains, by water, to Barking, accompanied by six journeymen pump and block makers, as bearers; to each of whom he gave a new white leather apron and a guinea.

There is a circumstance of his munificence ought not to be omitted, which I had nearly forgot, it was his custom, upon the birth of all his nieces' children, to present the mother with a gold coral, a pap boat, and a purse of fifty guineas. I appeal to those of my fair country-women who are mothers, whether such a gallant present would not be very pleasing to them upon such occasions; and I cannot dismiss this account without observing, that the poor were daily fed at his door, and never craved other relief from him in vain.

Mr. Day was not one of those persons who left the *grand account* to be balanced at the hour of dissolution, or who have to trust only to a sick bed repentance for the errors of their whole lives: he was a protestant, and a constant attendant upon divine worship at his parish church, and though he had no child of his own, he would always enforce the attendance of his nephews and nieces, their children, and of his servants.

Mr. Day was not without his averfions, which were generally well founded and immoveable, but he had few resentments. In his dress and manners he was simplicity itself, and he was an amateur of music and dancing, the meetings of which he frequently attended; upon one of these occasions he was invited to a superior circle, where he was told it would be necessary to wear ruffles, and a pair of the finest point lace was presented to him; he viewed them with some degree of contempt, and said, "if it was the custom he must comply, but it should be in his own way," and directed his
house-

housekeeper to get the lace died *green*, in which colour he wore them at that assembly, and upon all similar occasions.

Mr. Day retained his health until within a day or two of his death, and his faculties to the last. As he had lived, so he died—a devout christian, a sincere friend, a good master, and an honest man; he was just without austerity, liberal without profuseness, free without intemperance, and lively without excess, in fine he lived *merry and wise*, and died universally revered and lamented on the 19th of October in the 84th year of his age, and was buried agreeable to his will, in his oak coffin, in the church yard at Barking, in Essex, where the following epitaph may be seen.

Here lieth interr'd the Body of Mr. DANIEL DAY,
Block and Pump Maker, of the Parish of St.
John, Wapping, who departed this Life, Octo-
ber the 19th, 1767, aged 84 years.

Death, from this World, hath set me free
From all my Pain and misery.

Close to his grave is a brick tomb, with an inscription to the memory of his sister, Mrs. Sarah Killick, who died the 22d of August, 1782, in the 93d year of her age. A woman remarkable for the beauty of her person, sweetness of disposition, and the share of health she *also* enjoyed through life. Till her death she could play at cards, and read, and work, without spectacles.

HAVING thus briefly introduced to the reader, an outline of the character of Mr. Daniel Day, who in the latter part of his life was called OLD DANIEL DAY, we will proceed to say a few words of his favorite Oak.—This venerable and stupendous tree stands in HAINAULT FOREST, about 10 miles from

from London; four from the famous seat of the late Earl of Tynney; about three from Illford and 2 from the village of Chigwell in the county of Essex. The immense and uncommon magnitude of it furnishes matter of great curiosity and ample scope for the contemplative mind. Here the naturalist is struck with the prodigious productions, and the philosopher's imagination warmed by the wonderful work of Providence.

The trunk or main stem of this LORD OF THE FOREST measures in girth 66 feet or 22 Feet in diameter, from which 17 large branches issue, each of the dimensions of a tree of moderate growth, and most of them measuring not less than 12 feet in girth. For many years past it has been gradually decaying, yet it still retains periodical powers of vegetation, though the loftiest parts of the boughs are withered. About twenty years ago, in the meridian of the day, the whole shadow extended over an acre of ground.

We have not been able to learn with any degree of precision the age of this national ornament, but comparing it with other large oaks, whose ages have been ascertained, and particularly with that viewed by his Majesty in Oxfordshire, and lately felled in the domains of one of the colleges, the girth of which was 25 feet and said to be 600 years old, it may not be unfair to conclude that *Fairlop Oak*, being nearly three times as large, is three times its age. Mr. Phillips, a person employed by the king, has lately applied a patent mixture to the decaying parts, which, it is thought, will stop the progress of mortality; it is a pleasing reflection that we shall leave behind us, perhaps to a very remote generation, this august and surprising specimen of the growth of our country, and a most superb emblem of the principal material

terial in the vast and irresistible power of our natural force — THE WOODEN WALLS OF OLD ENGLAND.

Our friend Mr. Day, for the friend of mankind never dies, had a small estate, whether hereditary, or a purchase, we do not know, near the oak, and thither he yearly resorted about a fortnight after Midsummer to receive his rents; the congeniality of his temper would not suffer him to receive the good things of this world alone, and it was his custom to invite a few of his neighbours to accompany him, and there he would treat them with a repast of beans and bacon, &c. under the canopy of the Oak, the accommodations were provided from an adjacent small public-house, the May Pole. Mr. Day's friends were so well pleased with the rural novelty, that they one and all pledged themselves to accompany him on the same occasion every year, on the first Friday in July during their lives.

In the course of a few years this amicable meeting greatly increased, and became known to the neighbouring gentry, farmers and yeomanry; and a vast number of them annually, on the day of Mr. Day's jubilee, visited the place. Suttling booths were soon found to be necessary for their accommodation, which naturally produced various other booths for sale, arranged around the HUGB OAK; and about the year 1725, this charming spot began to present every resemblance of a regular fair.

It progressively encreasing: puppet-shews, wild beasts, fruits, ginger-bread, ribbons and toys of all descriptions, attended with the usual pastimes of a country wake soon succeeded, and in a very few years it became one of the most respectable, well regulated and harmonious fairs round the metropolis.

This

This new generation of Mr. Day's creation became his principal hobby-horse, and he found himself highly flattered by the honest attentions of his numerous visitors.

Suffer me here to digress for a few moments: Methinks we see the good old man indulging the grateful sensations resulting from a knowledge of his having founded and promoted a meeting of innocent conviviality, and receiving the smiling congratulations of artless beauty, dancing around him and his venerable tree, with bosoms light and pure as the atmosphere above them. Say, ye sons and daughters of dissipation, whose happiness is concentrated in midnight revelry; are your pursuits equal to the simple joys of a country fair? Is there no difference between the confined and crowded play-house, or opera, where you are all gasping for a little contaminated effluvia, and the healthful breezes which so fragrantly waft around Fairlop Oak?

See the ruddy glow of rosy health, so fascinatingly contrasted with the lily's rival, and the natural ringlets flowing with the playful wind! Behold the modest, yet delightful work of nature! Is there no distinction between these simple beauties, and the artful manufactured face, on which the faithless rouge and poisonous white lay waste God's best of works, and leave *not a wreck behind*?

But to return; the open and generous heart of Mr. Day expanded with inexpressible delight at being the cause of happiness to others, he thought some little return due to the lads and lasses, who so gratefully and respectfully caressed him; he provided several sacks of beans, and a sufficient quantity of bacon dressed; the bacon was mixed in slices with the beans, and distributed from the
trunk

trunk of the tree to the multitude in pans full.— The happy frolicksome contest for the envied portion, is more easily to be conceived than described. Unfortunate was he who did not procure a share for his fair-one. Blessings were the donor's reward, and the air resounded with huzzas ; the very leaves of the venerable tree nodded in silent and majestic gratitude. This custom he continued to his death.

How long the chosen companions of this festival lived to accompany the *founder* is not known. It is not to be doubted but they individually kept their word. Mr. Day survived them all, about ten in number, several years.

In the former part of Mr. Day's life, he usually walked to this favourite spot and back again ; later in life he was wont to ride on horseback, but having a fall from his horse, he declared he would never cross another ; he kept his vow, sold his horse, and purchased a mule, this obstinate animal, also unconscious of the worth he bore, threw his rider in the mire, Mr. Day discarded his mule as he had done his horse, and determined never more to trust himself upon the back of a four-legged beast. His next resource was to a post-chaise or a coach ; in one of these he also met with an accident, and ever after refused to enter into either. This last circumstance induced him to direct his remains to be conveyed by water to the place of burial, saying, " if he was conveyed in a hearse, he should be awakened." He next invented a machine to go by the aid of mechanical powers without horses, which after two years successful trial broke down in attempting the third expedition. His *dernier resort* was a jockey-cart, in which, attended by music, he took his annual trip up to the July preceding his death.

Long

Long previous to Mr. Day's exit Fairlop Fair was known all over Essex, and the adjoining counties; and naturally the inhabitants of Wapping and the eastern parts of London, could not be ignorant of it, consequently it was attended by a vast concourse of people. The engine-makers, pump-makers, and block-makers of Wapping, and other places contiguous to the river, a few years before Mr. Day's death, to the amount of about 30 or 40, every year went to the fair in a boat made of one piece of intire fir, covered with an awning, mounted on a coach carriage, drawn by six horses with flags, streamers and pendants flying, and a band of music, attended by a great many persons on horseback, in carriages, and on foot.

This custom, on the first Friday in every July, has been successively observed to this time, in compliment and in commemoration of their old friend and *brother chip*, to whose pious memory they never fail to drink. The great annual resort to *Fairlop Fair* is so much in the knowledge of twenty miles round, that it is needless to say more on the subject than that in point of the number of persons of all descriptions who go to it, and in accommodations and articles for sale, it is in no wise inferior to any fair or wake within that distance round London, excepting that it is only of one day's duration, and that there is no horses or cattle exposed for sale. The superstitious might be led to think that the mild and moderate spirit of *old Daniel Day* hovered over the plain, for at this fair, no rioting, intoxication or obscenity is found, all bears the face of honest and innocent sprightliness; friendship, mirth and decorum go hand in hand, and it seems the business of the whole to make each happy; in fact, the frequenters of this fair follow the example set before them by their old friend, and are upon this occasion,

sion, and we hope upon all others, as he was, *merry and wise*.

These sheets are the work of a few hours in retirement, unaided by other information, than some notes from a friend the relative of Mr. Day ; if it affords the smallest entertainment to the visitors of *Fairlop Fair*, or if in it there should be any one sentiment useful to the cause of virtue, the writer will be amply gratified: at all events, if he should be able to exclaim with Ovid, " I have performed neither to deserve praise nor blame ;" he will feel himself satisfied.

To the rich and fashionable part of the world, who are pleased with the relaxations of industry, and who are not too proud to join the humble sportive group, the writer presumes to recommend as a guide for their conduct the habits of *old Daniel Day*. To the honest husbandman and the ingenious artisan, who come to *Fairlop* for pastime and regalement, we point out to them that kind of tribute which was wont to have been paid to the *founder of the fair*.—A respectful behaviour to those who study to promote their felicity. And to all ranks of people we heartily recommend a most grateful acknowledgment to the SUPREME BEING for his goodness in permitting them to meet on this day in peace and festivity, while a great part of the universe is engaged in the horrid scene of foreign and domestic war. And that annually, during their lives, they may visit the *Old Oak* in health and content, and with hearts full of affection for their country, and loyalty for their KING, is the sincere wish of their friend,

THE AUTHOR.